

THE EIT - A DRIVER OF EUROPEAN INNOVATION

EIT - European Institute of Innovation and Technology

The EIT aims to give Europe's innovation capacity and its readiness for the knowledge society a much needed boost. Its overall goal is to create a new European way of delivering essential economic growth and societal benefits through innovation.

The EIT responds to Europe's particular situation, where the three sides of the knowledge triangle - excellent higher education, research and innovative business - are often still fragmented, thereby hindering a free flow of knowledge. The mission of the EIT is to grow and capitalise on the innovation capacity of partners from the knowledge triangle from the EU and beyond, notably via highly integrated Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs).

KIC - Knowledge and Innovation Community

The KICs are the operational base of the EIT. They are highly integrated, creative and excellence-driven partnerships, which bring together the fields of education, technology, research, business and entrepreneurship in order to create new innovations and new innovation models that will inspire others to emulate them. KICs are active in areas of long-term societal challenges, offering new opportunities for innovation in Europe and generating real impact in terms of new business creation and societal benefit. They seek to form strong innovation cultures and identities, driven by common visions and goals, and to build innovative "webs of excellence" through co-location centres.

The relationship between the KICs and the EIT is organised on a contractual basis, leaving a great degree of autonomy to the KICs to define their own legal status, internal organisation and working methods. The EIT's focus on impact is reflected in the strong focus on the leadership of KICs, simple approaches and the strong emphasis on entrepreneurship.

The first three KICs were selected on a competitive basis in December 2009: Climate-KIC (climate change mitigation and adaptation), KIC InnoEnergy (sustainable energy) and EIT ICT Labs (the future of the information and communication society).

EIT IMPACTS

The EIT aims to generate tangible impact in the following areas:

- ü Addressing key societal challenges: the KICs combine expertise from across disciplines to ensure innovative and global responses to complex societal challenges.
- ü Setting a clear business-friendly framework: turning new ideas into tangible new products, services or business opportunities will be the main benchmark of the EIT's and the KICs' success.
- ü Enhancing the free flow of knowledge through co-location: KICs are organised around co-location centres – geographical locations where most or the whole innovation chain is in close proximity. The emphasis is on people from diverse backgrounds (industry, SMEs, academia, nationality, gender, discipline...) working together with face-to-face contact, thus leading to great mobility of knowledge.
- ü Creating a new generation of entrepreneurs: people with an entrepreneurial mindset are the drivers of innovation, thereby keeping our economies and societies moving. The EIT promotes entrepreneurship education as a key feature of KICs' Masters and doctoral programmes by shifting the emphasis from 'learning about' to 'learning by doing'. The Master and PhD programmes will provide students with the entrepreneurial skills they need to succeed in the knowledge economy, focusing on learning outcomes and using innovative teaching methods.

FINANCING THE EIT: AN ENTREPRENEURIAL APPROACH

The EIT will be set up following an incremental growth path. An initial contribution from the EU budget (Euro 308.7 million) will help to launch the EIT and the KICs during the 2009-2013 period and will provide the support structure and the conditions necessary for knowledge transfer and networking.

KICs draw on a variety of sources in order to ensure a sound financial base:

- § National/Regional funding – e.g. grants from National educational or research councils
- § Community (non-EIT) funding - e.g. FP7 research grant or structural funding
- § Private funding – e.g. grant from a private foundation or contribution from private business
- § The participant's own resources - e.g. cash from the participant's own treasury or in-kind contributions such as the use of buildings (teaching facilities, laboratories, offices) or staff that the partners place at the disposal of the KIC without charge
- § EIT funding – the EIT grant to the KIC

This EU contribution will act as leverage. The EIT annual grant will be allocated to the KICs on a competitive basis and may be used to fund KIC added value actions within the KIC programme up to 100%. KIC added value actions are the activities that “make a KIC a KIC” and, for example, may include:

- § The establishment, administration and coordination of the KIC
- § Provision of EIT branded master, doctorate and post doctorate programmes within a KIC
- § Mobility schemes within the KIC
- § KIC specific IP activities
- § Incubation of KIC start-ups and spin-offs

Through their strong business component, the KICs are to become increasingly attractive targets for investment from the private sector. As the initiative is likely to generate considerable returns, businesses will be expected to lead the way in unleashing Europe's innovation potential by buying into and shaping the KICs with human and financial resources.

To attract private sector investment the EIT will establish the EIT Foundation with the objective of promoting and supporting its activities.

LAUNCHING THE KICs

In order to give the KICs a rapid start, the EIT has among others created a preparatory grant, intended to enable an immediate start on KIC activities; including putting in place organisation and management structures, the IP board, the business plan as well as securing the commitment of the various partners. With the preparatory grant in place, KICs are expected to phase in towards full activity very quickly. They should become fully operational shortly after having signed their seven year Framework Partnership Agreement with the EIT and after confirmation of the first annual grant agreements towards mid 2010.

THE EIT – OPEN TO THE WORLD

The EIT is an EU body with an international vision. Participation of excellent institutions and innovative companies from third countries in a KIC is clearly possible and desirable if they bring added value to the KIC. Participation of third country partners will be subject to the approval of the EIT Governing Board.

NEXT STEPS

The EIT is to be fully operational by end of 2010. The major steps towards its establishment include:

- § EIT headquarters in Budapest (spring 2010)
- § KICs will become fully operational and will deliver first results